

Otway's
Venice Preserved

Tragedy in 5 acts

Revised by
J P Kemble

1814

Otway's

VENICE PRESERVED,

Alano
J. P. Kemble
A TRAGEDY.

REVISED BY

J. P. KEMBLE;

AND NOW PUBLISHED AS IT IS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRES ROYAL.

LONDON:

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PERSONS REPRESENTED.

	<i>Drury-Lane.</i>	<i>Covent-Garden.</i>
<i>The Doge of Venice,</i>	Mr. Carr.	Mr. Creswell.
<i>Priuli,</i> —	Mr. Powell.	Mr. Egerton.
<i>Bedamar,</i> —	Mr. I. Wallack.	Mr. Barrymore.
<i>Jaffier,</i> —	Mr. Rae.	Mr. Conway.
<i>Pierre,</i> —	Mr. Raymond.	{ Mr. Kemble. Mr. Young.
<i>Renault,</i> —	Mr. R. Phillips.	Mr. Chapman.
<i>Elliot,</i> —	Mr. Waldegrave.	Mr. Hamerton.
<i>Spinosa,</i> —	Mr. Elrington.	Mr. Clarendon.
<i>Theodore,</i> —	Mr. I. West.	Mr. King.
<i>Mezzana,</i> —	Mr. Wallack.	Mr. Norris.
<i>Durand,</i> —	Mr. Baxter.	Mr. Grant.
<i>Captain of the Guard,</i>	Mr. Ray.	Mr. Jefferies.
<i>Officer,</i> —	Mr. Cooke.	Mr. Treby.
<i>Paulo,</i> —	Mr. West.	Mr. Howell.
<i>Belvidera,</i> —	Mrs. Bartley.	Miss O'Neill.

*Senators—Officers—Guards—Executioner—Attendants
on BELVIDERA.*

SCENE,—*Venice.*

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF
HENRY THE SEVENTH
OF ENGLAND
BY
JAMES HALLAM
ESQ.
OF LINCOLN'S INN
IN TWO VOLUMES
LONDON
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD
1807

THE HISTORY OF THE

VENICE PRESERVED.

ACT I.

SCENE,

St. Mark's Place.

Enter PRIULI and JAFFIER.

Priu. No more! I'll hear no more; begone and leave me.

Jaff. Not hear me! By my sufferings, but you shall. My lord, my lord, I'm not that abject wretch You think me. Patience! Where's the distance throws Me back so far, but I may boldly speak In right, though proud oppression will not hear me?

Priu. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaff. Could my nature e'er Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrongs, I need not now thus low have bent myself, To gain a hearing from a cruel father. Wrong'd you?

Priu. Yes, wrong'd me: In the nicest point, The honour of my house, you've done me wrong. You may remember,—for I now will speak, And urge its baseness,—when you first came home From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on By all men's eyes a youth of expectation, Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you, Courted, and sought to raise you to your merits; My house, my table, nay, my fortune too,

My very self was yours ; you might have us'd me
 To your best service ; like an open friend
 I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine :
 When, in requital of my best endeavours,
 You treacherously practis'd to undo me ;
 Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
 My only child, and stole her from my bosom.
 O, Belvidera !

Jaff. 'T is to me you owe her ;
 Childless you had been else, and in the grave
 Your name extinet, no more Priuli heard of.
 You may remember,—Scarce five years are past
 Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
 The Adriatick wedded by our duke,
 And I was with you : your unskilful pilot
 Dash'd us upon a rock ; when to your boat
 You made for safety ; enter'd first yourself ;
 The affrighted Belvidera following next,
 As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
 Was by a wave wash'd off into the deep ;
 When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
 And, buffeting the billows to her rescue,
 Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine :
 Like a rich conquest in one hand I bore her,
 And with the other dash'd the saucy waves
 That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :
 Indeed, you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude
 Rose in her soul ; for from that hour she lov'd me,
 Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Priu. You stole her from me, like a thief you stole
 her

At dead of night ; that cursed hour you chose
 To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
 May all your joys in her prove false, like mine ;
 A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,
 Attend you both ! continual discord make
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous ! still

May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppress and grind you, till at last you find
The curse of disobedience all your portion !

Jaff. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;
Heaven has already crown'd our faithful loves
With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty :
May he live to prove more gentle than his grandsire,
And happier than his father !

Priu. Rather, live
To bait thee for his bread, and din your ears
With hungry cries, whilst his unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want !

Jaff. You talk, as if 't would please you.

Priu. 'T would, by heaven.
Once she was dear indeed !—But she is gone ;
And, if I am a man, I will forget her.

Jaff. Would I were in my grave !

Priu. And she too with thee !
For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembran
cers

I once was happy.

Jaff. You use me thus, because you know my soul
Is fond of Belvidera : you perceive
My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.
O ! could my soul ever have known satiety,
Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs
As you upbraid me with, what hinders me
But I might send her back to you with contumely,
And court my fortune where she would be kinder ?

Priu. You dare not do 't.

Jaff. Indeed, my lord, I dare not ;
My heart that awes me, is too much my master :—
Three years are past since first our vows were plighted ;
During which time, the world must bear me witness,
I've treated Belvidera like your daughter,
The daughter of a senator of Venice ;
Distinction, place, attendance, and observance
Due to her birth, she always has commanded :

Out of my little fortune I've done this,
 Because, though hopeless e'er to win your nature,
 The world might see I lov'd her for herself,
 Not as the heiress of the great Priuli.

Priu. No more!

Jaff. Yes, all: and then, adieu for ever.
 There's not a wretch that lives on common charity,
 But's happier than me; for I have known
 The luscious sweets of plenty; every night
 Have slept with soft content about my head,
 And never wak'd but to a joyful morning:
 Yet now must fall like a full ear of corn,
 Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Priu. Home, and be humble; study to retrench;
 Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
 Those pageants of thy folly;
 Reduce the glittering trappings of thy wife
 To humble weeds, fit for thy little state:
 Then to some suburb cottage both retire,
 Drudge to feed loathsome life, get brats, and starve.
 Home, home, I say.— [Exit PRIULI.]

Jaff. Yes, if my heart would let me,
 This proud, this swelling heart:—Home I would go,
 But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
 Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors.
 I've now not fifty ducats in the world;
 Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin:
 O Belvidera!—O, she is my wife,—
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,
 But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. My friend, good-morrow!
 How fares the honest partner of my heart?
 What, melancholy! not a word to spare me?

Jaff. I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damn'd starv-
 ing quality
 Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villainy first set it up,
For its own ease and safety: Honest men
Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains,
They'd starve each other; lawyers would want practice,

Cut-throats rewards; each man would kill his brother
Himself, none would be paid or hang'd for murder.

Honesty! 'T was a cheat invented first
To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
And lord it uncontroll'd above their betters.

Jaff. Then honesty's but a notion?

Pier. Nothing else:

Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd:
He that pretends to most too, has least share in 't.—
'T is a ragged virtue Honesty!—no more on 't.

Jaff. Sure thou art honest?

Pier. So, indeed, men think me;
But they're mistaken, Jaffier; I'am a rogue
As well as they;—
A fine gay bold-fac'd villain, as thou seest me.
'T is true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;
I steal from no man; would not cut a throat,
To gain admission to a great man's purse,
Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend,
To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me,
Or crush the wretch beneath me;
Yet, Jaffier, for all this, I am a villain.

Jaff. A villain!—

Pier. Yes, a most notorious villain,—
To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures,
And own myself a man; to see our senators
Cheat the deluded people with a show
Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of:
They say, by them our hands are free from fetters;
Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;

Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;
 Drive us, like wrecks, down the rough tide of power,
 Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction:
 All that bear this are villains; and I one,
 Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,
 And check the growth of these domestick spoilers,
 That make us slaves, and tell us, 't is our charter.

Jaff. I think, no safety can be here for virtue;
 And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live
 In such a wretched state as this of Venice,
 Where all agree to spoil the publick good,
 And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity, nor peace;
 For the foundation's lost of common good:
 Justice is lame, as well as blind, amongst us;
 The laws, corrupted to their ends that make 'em,
 Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny
 That every day starts up to enslave us deeper.
 Now, could this glorious cause but find out friends
 To do it right,—O Jaffier!—then might'st thou
 Not wear those seals of woe upon thy face;
 The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
 And learn to value such a son as thou art.
 I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaff. Curs'd be the cause, though I, thy friend, be
 part on 't!

Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom;
 For I am us'd to misery, and, perhaps,
 May find a way to sweeten 't to thy spirit.

Pier. Too soon 't will reach thy knowledge!

Jaff. Then, from thee
 Let it proceed: there's virtue in thy friendship,
 Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
 Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then, thou art ruin'd!

Jaff. That I long since knew:
 I and ill fortune have been long acquaintance.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,

And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
 The sons of publick rapine were destroying:
 They told me, by the sentence of the law
 They had commission to seize all thy fortune;
 Nay, more, Priuli's cruel hand hath sign'd it:
 Here stood a ruffian with an horrid face
 Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
 Tumbled into a heap for publick sale;
 There was another making villainous jests
 At thy undoing: he had ta'en possession
 Of all thy ancient most domestick ornaments;—
 The very bed which on thy wedding night
 Receiv'd thee to the arms of Belvidera,
 The scene of all thy joys, was violated
 By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
 And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaff. Now, thank heaven,——

Pier. Thank heaven! for what?

Jaff. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of
 Venice,

Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are false;
 Where there's no trust, no truth; where innocence
 Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it!—
 Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
 Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch
 That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
 Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean'd,
 Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew sad,
 As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her,—
 E'en the lewd rabble that were gather'd round
 To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her,
 Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled pity:
 I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues; they pleas'd me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this story, from my soul;
 Since now I know the worst that can befall me.
 Ah, Pierre! I have a heart that could have borne
 The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me;

But, when I think what Belvidera feels,
 The bitterness her tender spirits taste of,
 I own myself a coward: Bear my weakness,
 If, throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
 I play the boy and blubber in thy bosom.
 O, I shall drown thee with my sorrows!

Pier. Burn,
 First, burn and level Venice to thy ruin.
 What! starve,—like beggars' brats in frosty weather
 Under a hedge,—and whine ourselves to death!
 Thou or thy cause shall never want assistance,
 Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee:
 Command my heart; thou'rt every way its master.

Jaff. No; there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners; dogs run mad;
 Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow,—
 Revenge!—the attribute of gods;—they stamp'd it,
 With their great image, on our natures. Die?—
 Consider well the cause that calls upon thee;
 And, if thou'rt base enough, die then: Remember,
 Thy Belvidera suffers:—Belvidera!—
 Die?—Damn first!—What! be decently interr'd
 In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
 With stinking rogues that rot in dirty winding-sheets,
 Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o' the soil?

Jaff. Oh!—

Pier. Well said, out with 't, swear a little.

Jaff. Swear!—

By sea and air,—by earth, by heaven and hell,—
 I will revenge my Belvidera's tears!

Hark thee, my friend,—Priuli—is—a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaff. Agreed.

Pier. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.

No more: Where shall we meet at night?

Pier. I'll tell thee:

On the Rialto, every night at twelve

I take my evening's walk of meditation ;
There we two'll meet, and talk of precious mischief

Jaff. Farewell!

Pier. At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour ; my plagues
Will keep me waking.—

[*Exit PIERRE.*

Tell me why, good heaven,
Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires
That fill the happiest man ! Ah ! rather, why
Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burthens ?
Why have I sense to know the curse that 's on me ?
Is this just dealing, Nature ?—

[*Sees BELVIDERA.*] Belvidera !—Poor Belvidera !—

BELVIDERA entering.

Belv. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice.—My lord, my love, my refuge !
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face ;
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightful joys.
O smile, as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul !

Jaff. As when our loves
Were in their spring ! Has then my fortune chang'd
thee ?

Art thou not, Belvidera, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee ?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour ?
Where ease my loaded heart ? O, where complain ?

Belv. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth ?
I joy more in thee,

Than did thy mother when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travail past.

Jaff. Can there in woman be such glorious faith ?

Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false !
 O woman,—lovely woman!—nature made thee
 To temper man ; we had been brutes without you !
 Angels are painted fair, to look like you :
 There 's in you all that we believe of heaven,
 Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
 Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Belv. If love be treasure, we 'll be wondrous rich ;
 O, lead me to some desert wide and wild,
 Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
 May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
 To the high heavens, and every listening planet,
 With what a boundless stock my bosom 's fraught !

Jaff. O, Belvidera, doubly I 'm a beggar,
 Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee !
 Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
 Is at my heels, and chases me in view.
 Canst thou bear cold and hunger ? Can these limbs,
 Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
 Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty ?
 When banish'd by our miseries abroad,
 As suddenly we shall be, to seek out
 In some far climate where our names are strangers
 For charitable succour, wilt thou then,—
 When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
 And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads,—
 Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then
 Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

Belv. O, I will love thee, even in madness love
 thee !

Though my distracted senses should forsake me,
 I 'd find some intervals when my poor heart
 Should 'suage itself, and be let loose to thine.
 Though the bare earth be all our resting-place,
 Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation,—
 I 'll make this arm a pillow for thy head,
 And, as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow.
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love

Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest :
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you heavens, and wonder how you
made her!

Reign, reign ye monarchs that divide the world :
Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
Tranquillity and happiness like mine :
Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall
And rise again to lift you in your pride ;
They wait but for a storm, and then devour you :
I, in my private bark already wreck'd,
Like a poor merchant, driven to unknown land,
That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
In one dear casket, and sav'd only that,
Since I must wander further on the shore,
Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more.

}
[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.

A C T II.

SCENE I.

The Rialto.

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. I'M here: and thus the shades of night
around me,

I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, surely 't is so with me;
For, every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet:
I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,

Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,
 To meet the foe of mankind in his walk;
 Sure I 'm so curs'd, that, though of heaven forsaken,
 No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.
 Hell, hell! why sleepest thou?

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Sure I 've stay'd too long:
 The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.—
 Speak, who goes there?

Jaff. A dog that comes to howl
 At yonder moon. What 's he that asks the question?

Pier. A friend to dogs; for they are honest crea-
 tures,
 And ne'er betray their masters; never fawn
 On any that they love not. Well met, friend.—
 Jaffier?

Jaff. The same.

Pier. Where 's Belvidera?—

Jaff. For a day or two
 I 've lodg'd her privately, till I see further
 What fortune will do with me. 'Pr'ythee, friend,
 If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,
 Speak not of Belvidera.

Pier. Speak not of her!

Jaff. O, no; nor name her.

Pier. May be, I wish her well.

Jaff. Whom well?

Pier. Thy wife, thy lovely Belvidera:
 I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
 And no harm done.

Jaff. Y' are merry, Pierre.

Pier. I am so;
 Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile;
 We 'll all rejoice.—Here 's something to buy pins:
 Marriage is chargeable. [*Gives him a purse.*]

Jaff. I but half wish'd
 To see the devil, and he 's here already.

Well?

What must this buy? Rebellion, murder, treason?
Tell me which way I must be damn'd for this.

Pier. When last we parted we'd no qualms like
these,

But entertain'd each other's thoughts, like men
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform'd since our last meeting? What new miracles
Have happen'd? Has Priuli's heart relented?
Can he be honest?

Jaff. Kind heaven, let heavy curses
Gall his old age! cramps, aches rack his bones!
And bitterest disquiet wring his heart!
O, let him live till life become his burthen,
Let him groan under 't long! linger an age
In the worst agonies and pangs of death,
And find its ease but late!

Pier. Nay, could'st thou not
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all
The senate round, as to one single villain?

Jaff. But curses stick not: Could I kill with cursing,
By heaven I know not thirty heads in Venice
Should not be blasted; senators should rot
Like dogs on dunghills:—
O, for a curse to kill with!

Pier. Daggers, daggers, are much better.

Jaff. Ha!

Pier. Daggers.

Jaff. But where are they?

Pier. O!—a thousand
May be dispos'd in honest hands in Venice.

Jaff. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet, a heart half wrong'd
As thine has been, would find the meaning, Jaffier.

Jaff. A thousand daggers, all in honest hands!
And have not I a friend will stick one here?

Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be che-
rish'd

To a nobler purpose, I would be that friend :
But thou hast better friends ; friends, whom thy
 wrongs

Have made thy friends ; friends, worthy to be call'd so.
I'll trust thee with a secret :—There are spirits
This hour at work,—But, as thou art a man,
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter ;
And, when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

Jaff. When thou would'st bind me, is there need
 of oaths ?

Is coward, fool, or villain in my face ?
If I seem none of these, I dare believe
Thou would'st not use me in a little cause,
For I am fit for honour's toughest task,
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province :
And, for a villainous inglorious enterprise,—
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pier. Nay, 't is a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier* ;
For it is founded on the noblest basis,
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for 't ;
Openly act a deed the world may gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 't is done.

Jaff. For liberty ?

Pier. For liberty, my friend.
'Thou shalt be free'd from base *Priuli's* tyranny,
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again ;
I shall be free'd from those opprobrious wrongs
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward ;
All Venice free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just right ; fools shall be pull'd
From wisdom's seat ; those baleful unclean birds,
Those lazy owls, who, perch'd near fortune's top,
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings

To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues that would rise
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do?

Pier. Canst thou not kill a senator?

Jaff. By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
Were to be had, and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then!

Jaff. [*Kneels.*] I do, by all those glittering stars,
And yon great ruling planet of the night,—
By all good spirits above, and ill below,—
By love and friendship dearer than my life,—
No power or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.—
A council's held hard by, where the destruction
Of this great empire's hatching; there I'll lead thee.
But be a man; for thou'rt to mix with men
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
And rule it when't is wildest.

Jaff. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning:—Yes, I will be a man;
And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou seest my fears
Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and show it for a coward's.—
Come, let's be gone; for from this hour I chase
All little thoughts, all tender human follies,
Out of my bosom: Vengeance shall have room:
Revenge——

Pier. And liberty!

Jaff. Revenge! Revenge!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the House of a Grecian Courtezan.

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition? the worst
ground
A wretch can build on! 'T is, indeed, at distance,

A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;
 The height delights us, and the mountain top
 Looks beautiful, because 't is nigh to heaven:
 But we ne'er think how sandy 's the foundation,
 What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.—
 Who 's there?

Enter SPINOSA.

Spin. Renault, good morrow! for by this time,
 I think, the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
 And weighs up morning: Has the clock struck twelve?

Ren. Yes; clocks will go as they are set: but man,
 Irregular man, 's ne'er constant, never certain.
 I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
 In waiting dull attendance: 'T is the curse
 Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,
 With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us, it can
 frighten!

Ren. What 's then the cause that I am here alone?
 Why are we not together?—

Enter ELLIOT.

O sir, welcome!—

You are an Englishman; when treason 's hatching,
 One might have thought you 'd not have been behind-
 hand.—

In what whore's lap have you been lolling?
 Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
 Beef and a sea-coal fire, he 's yours for ever.

Elli. Frenchman, you 're saucy.

Ren. How!—

*Enter BEDAMAR, MEZZANA, DURAND, and
 THEODORE.*

Beda. At difference? fie!

Is this a time for quarrels? Thieves and rogues
 Fall out and brawl: Should men of your high calling,—

Men separated by the choice of Providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly, as in one great jewel
To adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on,—
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles?

Ren. Boys!

Beda. Renault, thy hand.

Ren. I thought, I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers
That can't forgive my froward age its weakness.

Beda. Elliot, thou once hadst virtue; I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bend with godlike goodness,
Not half thus courted: 'T is thy nation's glory
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
One more embrace, my friends.

[RENAULT and ELLIOT embrace.]

United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.
Totters it not already?

Elli. 'Would 't were tumbling!

Beda. Nay, it shall down; this night we seal its ruin.

Enter PIERRE.

O Pierre,—thou art welcome.

Come to my breast; for, by its hopes, thou look'st
Lovely dreadfull, and the fate of Venice
Seems on thy sword already.—O, my Mars!—
The poets that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesied of thee.

Pier. Friends, was not Brutus,—
I mean that Brutus who in open senate
Stabb'd the first Cæsar that usurp'd the world,—
A gallant man?

Ren. Yes, and Catiline too,
Though story wrong his fame; for he conspir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country:
His cause was good.

Beda. And ours as much above it
As, Renault, thou 'rt superior to Cethegus,
Or Pierre to Cassius.

Pier. Then, to what we aim at :—
When do we start ? or must we talk for ever ?.

Beda. No, Pierre, the deed 's near birth : Fate seems
to 've set

The business up, and given it to our care.
I hope there 's not a heart or hand amongst us,
But what is firm and ready.

Elli. All.

We 'll die with Bedamar.

Beda. O men,
Matchless, as will your glory be hereafter !
The game is for a matchless prize, if won ;
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world ;
This wretched state has starv'd them in its service,
And, by your bounty quicken'd, they 're resolv'd
To serve your glory, and revenge their own ;
They 've all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for the alarm, and grumble 't is so tardy.

Beda. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied diligence
Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease ;
After this night, it is resolv'd we meet
No more, till Venice own us for her lords.

Pier. How lovelily the Adriatic whore,
Dress'd in her flames, will shine ! Devouring flames !
Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom,
And hiss in her foundation.

Beda. Now, if any
Amongst us all that own this glorious cause,
Have friends or interest he would wish to save,
Let it be told : The general doom is seal'd ;
But I 'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my weakness.

I have a friend; hear it,—O, such a friend!
My heart was ne'er shut to him: Nay, I'll tell you,
He knows the very business of this hour,—

[*The Conspirators are much agitated.*]

But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it:
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How! all betray'd?

Pier. No:—I've dealt nobly with you,
I've brought my all into the publick stock:
I'd but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you:
Receive and cherish him:—Or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless, as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,—
To ease your fears, I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.—
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter JAFFIER, with a Dagger in his hand.

Beda. His presence bears the show of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know, you'll wonder all that thus, uncall'd,
I dare approach this place of fatal councils:
But I'm amongst you; and, by heaven, it glads me
To see so many virtues thus united
To restore justice and dethrone oppression.
Command this steel, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast: but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate,
It shrinks not, though I meet a father there.
Would you behold this city flaming? here's
A hand, shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To the arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, sir.

Jaff. Nay, by heaven, I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces;
You fear me villain: and, indeed, 't is odd

To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,
Of matters that have been so well debated:
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with counsels:
I hate this senate, am a foe to Venice,
A friend to none but men resolv'd, like me,
To push on mischief.—O! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus.

Beda. Pierre, I must embrace him.—

[BEDAMAR and JAFFIER embrace.]

My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

Ren. [*Aside.*] I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaff. Still, I see,

The cause delights me not:—Your friends survey me
As I were dangerous:—But I come arm'd
Against all doubts; and to your trust will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay
for.—

My Belvidera!—Hoa!—my Belvidera!—

Beda. What wonder next?

Jaff. Let me entreat you, sirs,

As I have henceforth hope to call you friends,
That all, but the ambassador and this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,
Withdraw a while, to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt* MEZZANA, DURAND, THEODORE,
SPINOSA, and ELLIOT.]

Beda. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaff. My Belvidera!—Belvidera!—

[BELVIDERA without.]

Belv. Who,

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love.

Enter BELVIDERA.

Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaff. Indeed, 't is late.

Belv. Alas! where am I? Whither is 't you lead me?

Methinks, I read distraction in your face:
You shake and tremble too: Your blood runs cold.—
Heavens guard my love, and bless his heart with patience!

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness!
Who has ordain'd it so, that thou and I,—
Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,
And I, the wretched'st of the race of man,—
This very hour, without one tear, must part.

Belv. Part! must we part? O, am I then forsaken?
Why drag you from me? Whither are you going?
My dear! my life! my love!

Jaff. O, friends!—

Belv. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart;
She 'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose;
I charge you take her: but with tenderest care
Relieve her troubles and assuage her sorrows.

Ren. Rise, madam, and command amongst your servants.

Jaff. To you, sirs, and your honours, I bequeathe her,—

And with her this:— [*Gives a Dagger to RENAULT.*]

Whene'er I prove unworthy,—
You know the rest,—then strike it to her heart:
And tell her he, who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The passionate vows of still increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Belv. O, thou unkind one!—
Have I deserv'd this from you?
Look on me, tell me; speak, thou dear deceiver!
If I am false, accuse me; but, if true,
Don't, 'pr'ythee, don't in poverty forsake me,
But pity the sad heart that's torn with parting.
Yet hear me, yet recall me.—*Jaffier! Jaffier!*—

[*Exeunt BEDAMAR, BELVIDERA, and RENAULT.*—
PIERRE and JAFFIER.]

A C T III.

SCENE,

A Room in the House of a Grecian Courtesan.

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belv. I 'm sacrific'd ! I 'm sold ! betray'd to shame !
Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me !
He that should guard my virtue has betray'd it ;
Left me, undone me. Oh, that I could hate him !

Enter JAFFIER.

Where shall I go ? O whither, whither wander ?

Jaff. Can Belvidera want a resting-place,
When these poor arms are open to receive her ?
There was a time,——

Belv. Yes, yes, there was a time,
When Belvidera's tears, her cries, and sorrows
Were not despis'd ; when, if she chanc'd to sigh,
Or look but sad, there was indeed a time,
When Jaffier would have ta'en her in his arms,
Eas'd her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her till he found the cause.
But well I know why you forsake me thus :
I am no longer fit to bear a share
In your concernments ; my weak female virtue
Must not be trusted ; 't is too frail and tender.

Jaff. O Porcia, Porcia, what a soul was thine !

Belv. That Porcia was a woman : and when Brutus,
Big with the fate of Rome,—heaven guard thy safety !—
Conceal'd from her the labours of his mind,
She let him see her blood was great as his,
Flow'd from a spring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles as his love.
Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me ; strike it

Here to my heart ; and, as the blood flows from it,
Judge if it run not pure as Cato's daughter's.

Jaff. O, Belvidera !—

Belv. Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain ?

Jaff. Ha ! a villain ?

Belv. Yes, to a villain ? Why, at such an hour,
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches
That look as hell had drawn them into league ?
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies,—
To you, sirs, and to your honours I bequeathe her,
And with her this : Whene'er I prove unworthy,—
You know the rest,—then strike it to her heart ?
O, why's that “ rest ” conceal'd from me ? Must I
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust ?

For such I know I am ; that's all my value.
But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves,—
Straight to the senate, tell them all I know,
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

Jaff. Is this the Roman virtue ? this the blood
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter ?
Would she have e'er betray'd her Brutus ?

Belv. No ;
For Brutus trusted her : Wert thou so kind,
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee ?

Jaff. I shall undo myself and tell thee all.
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me further ;
Think, I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature,
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of
Into vile tears, and despicable sorrows :
Then, if thou should'st betray me,——

Belv. Shall I swear ?

Jaff. No, do not swear ; I would not violate
Thy tender nature with so rude a bond :
But, as thou hop'st to see me live my days
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast ;
I've bound myself by all the strictest sacraments,
Divine and human,——

Belv. Speak.

Jaff. To kill thy father,——

Belv. My father!

Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my Belvidera :—He amongst us
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd.

Belv. Oh!—

Jaff. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought;
For, if thou dost,——

Belv. I know it, thou wilt kill me :
Do, strike thy sword into this bosom ; lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe.
Murder my father ! Though his cruel nature
Has persecuted me to my undoing,
Driven me to basest wants, can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age ?
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd ?
And canst thou shed the blood that gave me being ?
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers,—
Join
With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaff. Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera : I've engag'd
With men of souls, fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind ; there's not a heart amongst them,
But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions.

Belv. What's he, to whose curs'd hands last night
thou gav'st me ?

Was that well done ? O ! I could tell a story
Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee.

Belv. O my love, if e'er
Thy Belvidera's peace deserv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place ! Last night, last night !

Jaff. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Belv. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief,—
No sooner was I laid on my sad bed,
But that vile wretch approach'd me.—
O, how I wept and sigh'd!
And shrunk and trembled!—wish'd in vain for him
That should protect me! Thou, alas! wert gone.

Jaff. Patience, sweet heaven, till I make vengeance
sure!

Belv. He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou
gav'st him,
And, with upbraiding smiles, he said, *Behold it;*
This is the pledge of a false husband's love:
And in my arms then press'd, and would have clasp'd
me;

But with my cries I scar'd his coward heart,
Till he withdrew and mutter'd vows to hell:—
These are thy friends; with these thy life, thy honour,
Thy love, all's stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaff. No more: I charge thee, keep this secret
close:

Clear up thy sorrows; look, as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more: Retire,—
Retire, my life,—and doubt not of my honour;
I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love.

Belv. O, should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more!

Jaff. Return no more? I would not live without
thee

Another night, to purchase the creation.

Belv. When shall we meet again?

Jaff. Anon, at twelve:

I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,
Come, like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Belv. Indeed?

Jaff. By all our loves.

Belv. 'T is hard to part :
But sure no falsehood ever look'd so fairly.
Farewell ! Remember twelve. [*Exit BELVIDERA.*]

Jaff. Let heaven forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, 'thy love !

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Jaffier.

Jaff. Who calls ?

Pier. A friend, that could have wish'd
To have found thee otherwise employ'd. What, hunt
A wife on the dull foil ! Sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections ?
What feminine tale hast thou been listening to,
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs, and tooth-ach got
By thin-sol'd shoes ? Damnation ! that a fellow
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak in corners thus
To waste his time, and fool his mind with love.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling ?

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaff. 'Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damn'd condition : for, I 'll tell thee,
That canker-worm call'd lechery has touch'd it ;
'T is tainted vilely. Would'st thou think it ? Renault,
That mortified old wither'd winter rogue,
Loves simple fornication like a priest !
I found him out for watering at my wife :
He visited her last night, like a kind guardian.
Faith, she has some temptations, that 's the truth on 't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust ?—

Jaff. 'T was something late though
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed ?

Jaff. Yes, faith, in virgin sheets
White as her bosom, Pierre ; dish'd neatly up ;—
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.

Pier. Patience guide me!—

He us'd no violence?

Jaff. No, no, out on 't, violence!

Play'd with her neck, brush'd her with his grey beard,
Struggled and touz'd, tickled her till she squeak'd a
little,

May be, or so,—but not a jot of violence.

Pier. Damn him!—

Jaff. Ay, so say I!—But hush, no more on 't,—

Sure, it is near the hour

We all should meet for our concluding orders:

Will the ambassador be here in person?

Pier. No; he has sent commission to that villain
Renault, to give the executing charge.—

I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
And keep thy temper; for a brave revenge
Ne'er comes too late.

Jaff. Fear not; I am cool as patience.

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way through the
hall:

His thoughts seem full.

Jaff. 'Pr'ythee, retire and leave me
With him alone: I'll put him to some trial;
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pier. Be careful then.

Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.—

[Exit PIERRE.]

What, be a devil! take a damning oath
For shedding native blood! Can there be sin
In merciful repentance?—O, this villain!

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Perverse and peevish! What a slave is man,
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him!
Despatch the tool her husband?—That were well.—
Who's there?

Jaff. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally!

The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge,
Is very well.

Jaff. Sir, are you sure of that?
Stands she in perfect health? Beats her pulse even?
Neither too hot, nor cold?—

Ren. What means that question?

Jaff. O! women have fantastick constitutions,
Inconstant in their wishes, always wavering,
And never fix'd. Was it not boldly done,
Even at first sight, to trust the thing I lov'd—
A tempting treasure too!—with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? But thou art honest.

Ren. Who dares accuse me?

Jaff. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue! I have tried it, and declare,
Were I to choose a guardian of my honour,
I'd put 't into thy keeping; for I know thee.

Ren. Know me?—

Jaff. Ay, know thee:—there's no falsehood in thee;
Thou look'st—just as thou art.—Let us embrace.—
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine?

Ren. You dare not do 't.

Jaff. You lie, sir.

Ren. How!

[*Noise heard without.*]

Jaff. No more:—

'T is a base world, and must reform; that's all.

*Enter SPINOSA, ELLIOT, THEODORE, DURAND, and
MEZZANA.*

Ren. Spinoso?—Elliot?

Ellie. The same.

Ren. You're welcome.

Spin. You're trembling, sir.

Ren. 'T is a cold night:—Indeed,
I am aged,
Full of decay and natural infirmities:—
We shall be warm, my friends, I hope, to-morrow.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. 'T was not well done; thou should'st have
strok'd,
And not have gall'd him.

Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on 't.—
Heaven! where am I? Beset with cursed fiends
That wait to damn me. What a devil's man,
When he forgets his nature!—Hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 't is late: Are we assembled all?

Spin. All, all.

Ren. O, you are men, I find,
Fit to behold your fate and meet her summons:
To-morrow's rising sun must see you all
Deck'd in your honours.—Are the soldiers ready?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand, must
possess

St. Mark's: You, captain, know your charge already,
'T is to secure the ducal palace:

Be all this done with the least tumult possible,
Till in each place you post sufficient guards;
Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaff. [*Aside.*] O, reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody
villain!

Ren. During this execution, Durand, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast;
And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets:
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the arsenal gates;
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon, if it dare resist,
Batter to ruin: But, above all, I charge you
Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition; if there lives a senator
After to-morrow, though the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends;

If possible, let's kill the very name
Of senator, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. [*Aside.*] Merciless, horrid slave!—Ay, blood
enough,
Shed blood enough, old Renault: How thou charm'st
me!

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till
fate

Join us again, or separate us ever:

Let us all remember,

We wear no common cause upon our swords:

Let each man think that on his single virtue

Depends the good and fame of all the rest,

Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy:—

You droop, sir.

Jaff. No; with most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.—

[*Aside.*] O, Belvidera, take me to thy arms,
And show me where's my peace, for I have lost it.

[*Exit JAFFIER.*]

Ren. Without the least remorse then let's resolve
With fire and sword to exterminate these tyrants
Under whose weight this wretched country labours.

Pier. And may those powers above that are pro-
pitious

To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it!

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
Should there, my friends, be found among us one
False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,
What vengeance, were enough for such a villain?

Elli. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if, as here I stand
Listed by fate among her darling sons,
Though I'd one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature,
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground for fear
He meant foul play,—may this right hand drop from
me,

If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who,
Who would do less? Would'st thou not, Pierre, the
same?

Pier. You've singled me, sir, out for this hard
question,

As if't were started only for my sake.
Am I the thing you fear? Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords. Am I a traitor?

Ren. No: but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less.—Come, sirs, 't is now no time
To trifle with our safety: Where's this Jaffier?

Spin. He left the room just now in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him: I observ'd him
During the time I took for explanation:
He was transported, from most deep attention,
To a confusion which he could not smother.—
What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution: He remains

Yet in our power; I, for my own part, wear
A dagger——[*Draws the Dagger JAFFIER gave him.*]

Pier. Well?

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where?

Ren. Buried in his heart.

Pier. Away!——[*Snatches the Dagger from RENAULT.*]

We're yet all friends.—

No more of this: 't will breed ill blood among us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the
house,

Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing? Who's he'll shed the
blood

That's dear to me?—Is 't you?—or you?—or you,
sir?—

What! not one speak? How you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!

Yet not a word?—Then, sir,—[*To RENAULT*].—I'll
tell you a secret;

Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue.

Ren. A coward! [*Handles his Sword.*]

Pier. Put, put up thy sword, old man;
Thy hand shakes at it.—Come, let's heal this breach;
I am too hot; we yet may live all friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again? Who's that?

Spin. 'T' was I.

Elli. And I.

Ren. And I.

Spin. And all.—

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier. One such word more, by heaven, I'll to the
senate

And hang you all, like dogs in clusters.—

[*They clap their hands to their Swords.*]

Why peep your coward swords half out their shells?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die,—and yet dare talk of killing!

Ren. Go to the senate and betray us! Haste!

Secure thy wretched life! We fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's rank falsehood.

Fear'st thou not death? Fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood an utter foe to smarting.—

Had Jaffier's wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.—

[*The other Conspirators appear much surprised.*]

Faugh—how that stinks!— [*Exit RENAULT.*]

Away, disperse all to your several charges,

And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you:

I'll bring that man whose blood you so much thirst
for,

And you shall see him venture for you fairly:—

Hence, hence, I say.

Spin. I fear we've been to blame,

And done too much.

Elli. Forgive us, gallant friend.

Spin. Here, take our swords, and crush 'em with your feet.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt and cast me as you will.
Whence arose all this discord?

O, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd!
How near a fall was all we'd long been building!

What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,

If one the bravest and the best of men

Had fallen a sacrifice to rash suspicion,

Butcher'd by those whose cause he came to cherish!

O, could you know him all as I have known him,

How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,

You would not leave this place till you had seen him,

And gain'd remission for the worst of follies!

Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,

And to your loves me better recommend,

That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend. }
[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT III.

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

A Street.

Enter BELVIDERA and JAFFIER.

Jaff. WHERE dost thou lead me? Every step I
move,

Methinks, I tread upon some mangled limb

Of a rack'd friend. O, my dear charming ruin,

Where are we wandering?

Belv. To eternal honour;

'To do a deed shall chronicle thy name
 Among the glorious legends of those few
 That have sav'd sinking nations : Every street
 Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour ;
 And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaff. Rather, remember him who, after all
 The sacred bonds of oaths and holier friendship,
 In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
 Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth and honour,
 To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.
 Why wilt thou damn me ?

Belv. O, inconstant man,
 How will you promise ! how will you deceive !
 Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
 Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,
 And let thy dagger do its bloody office :
 Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live
 Till I 'm a victim to the hateful will
 Of that infernal devil,—
 Last night, my love !—

Jaff. Name, name it not again !—
 Destruction, swift destruction,
 Fall on my coward head, if I forgive him !

Belv. Delay no longer then, but to the senate ;
 And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd :
 Tell them what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,
 Have been prepar'd ; how near 's the fatal hour ;
 Save thy poor country ; save the reverend blood
 Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
 Must else see shed.

Jaff. Oh !—

Belv. Think what then may prove
 My lot ! the ravisher may then come safe,
 And, 'midst the terror of the public ruin,—

Jaff. By all heaven's powers, prophetick truth
 dwells in thee ;
 For every word thou speak'st strikes through my heart

Like a new light, and shows it how 't has wander'd:—
Just what thou 'st made me, take me, Belvidera,
And lead me to the place where I 'm to say
This bitter lesson; where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy and friends.
Must I betray my friends? Ah! take me quickly,
Secure me well before that thought 's renew'd;
If I relapse once more, all 's lost for ever.

Belv. Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera?

Jaff. No, thou 'rt my soul itself; wealth, friendship,
honour,
All present joys, and earnest of all future,
Are summ'd in thee.

Enter a Captain and Guards.

Capt. Stand!—Who goes there?

Belv. Friends.

Capt. But what friends are you?

Belv. Friends to the senate and the state of Venice.

Capt. My orders are, to seize on all I find
At this late hour, and bring them to the council,
Who are now sitting.

Jaff. Sir, you shall be obey'd.—

[Delivers his Sword.]

Now the lot 's cast,—and, fate, do what thou wilt.

[Exeunt JAFFIER and BELVIDERA, guarded.]

SCENE II.

The Council Chamber.

*The Duke of Venice, PRIULI, and nine other Senators,
discovered.*

Duke. Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,
Speak, why are we assembled here this night?
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of Venice' honour or its safety?

Prin. Could words express the story I've to tell you,
 Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
 That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
 We all should weep, tear off our purple robes,
 And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
 On the sad earth, and cry aloud to heaven:
 Heaven knows if yet there be an hour to come
 Ere Venice be no more!

Duke. How!

Prin. Nay, we stand
 Upon the very brink of gaping ruin:
 Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
 To massacre us all, our wives and children,
 Kindred and friends; our palaces and temples
 To lay in ashes; nay, the hour too fix'd;
 The swords, for aught I know, drawn e'en this moment,
 And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands
 I had this warning: But, if we are men,
 Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
 That may inform the world in after ages
 Our virtue was not ruin'd, though we were.

[*A Noise without.*]

Capt. [*Without.*] Room, room, make room there
 for a prisoner.

Enter an Officer.

Duke. Speak there:—What disturbance?

Off. A prisoner have the guards seiz'd in the street,
 Who says, he comes to inform this reverend council
 About the present danger.

Duke. Give him entrance.

Off. Bring in your prisoner.

Enter JAFFIER, Captain and Guards.

Duke. Well, who are you?

Jaff. A villain.

'Would every man that hears me
 Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd that a plot has been contriv'd
Against this state, that you've a share in 't too :
If you're a villain, to redeem your honour,
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaff. Think not that I to save my life come hither,
I know its value better ; but in pity
To all those wretches whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice ;
But use me as my dealings may deserve,
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates :
Give him the tortures.

Jaff. That you dare not do ;
Your fears won't let you, nor the longing itch
To hear a story which you dread the truth of ;
Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.
Cowards are scar'd with threatenings ; boys are whipt
Into confessions ; but a steady mind
Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
Give him the tortures ! Name but such a thing
Again,—by heaven, I'll shut these lips for ever ;
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away that you may guess at.

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaff. For myself full pardon,
Besides the lives of two and twenty friends,
Whose names are here enroll'd:—

[*Delivers a List to the Officer, who gives it to the Duke.*]

Nay, let their crimes
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend council,
That in a full assembly of the senate
The thing I ask be ratified :—Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secrets of your danger.

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaff. By all the hopes

You have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear.

Duke. We swear.— [*The Senators all bow.*]

Jaff. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you and your posterity be bless'd
Or curs'd for ever!

Duke. Else, be curs'd for ever!

Jaff. Then, here's the full disclose
Of all that threatens you.—

[*Delivers another Paper to the Duke.*]

Now, fate, thou hast caught me.

Duke. Give order that all diligent search be made
To seize these men; their characters are publick;

[*Gives the Papers to the Officer.*]

The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of a fam'd Grecian courtezan
Call'd Aquilina: See that place secur'd.—

[*Exit Officer.*]

You, Jaffier, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaff. 'Would the chains of death
Had bound me fast ere I had known this minute!

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaff. Sir, if possible,
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may
lose me;

Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee!

[*Exeunt Captain, JAFFIER, and Guards.*]

[*Much Noise and Trampling without.*]

Off. [*Without.*] More traitors:—room, room; make
room there.

Duke. How's this?
The treason is already at the doors.

Enter Officer and Captain.

Off. My lords, more traitors,—

Seiz'd in the very act of consultation,
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.—
Bring in the prisoners.

[*Loud Noise and Trampling without.*]

Enter SPINOSA, ELLIOT, THEODORE, DURAND, MEZ-
ZANA, RENAULT, and PIERRE, in Chains.

Pier. You, my lords and fathers,—
As you are pleas'd to call yourselves,—of Venice,
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,
Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those that bring you conquest home and honours?

Duke. Go on: you shall be heard, sir.

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for
fighting
Your battles with confederated powers?
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you,
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours,—
When you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your
palace,
And saw your wife the Adriatick plough'd,
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours,—
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians
The task of honour and the way to greatness?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace?
And this my recompense! If I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge: Or show the wretch that's base
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one Jaffier?

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue:
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father, taught me first to love him.

Duke. See him brought forth.

[*Captain signs to the Guard without.*]

Enter JAFFIER in Chains, and Guards.

Pier. My friend too bound? Nay, then
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall.—
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine,
They're but one thing? These reverend tyrants,

Jaffier,

Call us all traitors: Art thou one, my brother?

Jaff. To thee, I am the falsest veriest slave
That e'er betray'd a generous trusting friend,
And gave up honour, to be sure of ruin.
All our fair hopes, which morning was to have crown'd,
Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So,—then all's over!

Venice has lost her freedom: I my life,
No more.

Duke. Say,—will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy?

Pier. Curs'd be your senate! curs'd your constitution!

The curse of growing factions and division
Still vex your counsels, shake your publick safety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me!

Duke. Pardon or death?

Pier. Death,—honourable death.

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can
give:

No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council.—Guard your prisoners, sir:—[*To Officer.*]

Take Pierre into your charge, apart from the rest.—
[*To Captain.*]

Jaffier, you're free; but these must wait for judgment.

[*Exeunt Duke, Senators, Conspirators, and Officer.*]

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to
my straw:

It will not be the first time I've lodg'd hard
To do your senate service.

Jaff. Hold one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgement of the
senate?

Presumptuous rebel!—[*Strikes JAFFIER.*—On,—

[*Exeunt Captain and Guards.*

Jaff. By heaven, you stir not;
I must be heard; I must have leave to speak.
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But, use me as thou wilt, thou canst not wrong me;
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
And, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy
cheat

That would'st encroach upon my credulous ears,
And cant'st thus vilely? Hence; I know thee not.

Jaff. Not know me, Pierre!

Pier. No, know thee not: What art thou?

Jaff. Jaffier, thy friend,—thy once-lov'd valu'd
friend,

Though now deserv'dly scorn'd and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou Jaffier? thou my once-lov'd valu'd
friend?

By heavens, thou ly'st; the man so call'd,—my friend!
Was generous, honest, faithful, just and valiant;
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely;
Dear to my eyes and tender to my heart:
But thou!—a wretched, base, false, worthless coward;
Poor in thy soul and loathsome in thy aspect;
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.—
'Pr'ythee avoid, nor longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee; by these tears, I
have not.

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me? Dar'st thou call thyself

Jaffier, that once-lov'd valu'd friend of mine,
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these chains?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment,—

Whence this dishonour but from thee, thou false one?

Jaff. All's true: yet grant one thing, and I've done asking.

Pier. What's that?

Jaff. To take thy life on such conditions
The council have propos'd: thou and thy friends
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life! ask my life!—Confess!—Record myself

A villain!—for the privilege to breathe,
And carry up and down this cursed city
A discontented and repining spirit,
Burthensome to itself, a few years longer?
To lose it, may be, at last in a lewd quarrel
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art!
No; this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,
When only men like thee are fit to live in't.

Jaff. By all that's just,——

Pier. Swear by some other powers;
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaff. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee
Till to thyself at least thou'rt reconcil'd,
However thy resentments deal with me.

Pier. Not leave me?

Jaff. No; thou shalt not force me from thee:
Use me reproachfully, and like a slave:
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head; I'll bear it all with patience
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty;
Lie at thy feet and kiss 'em, though they spurn me;

Till, wounded by my sufferings, thou relent
And raise me to thy arms with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaff. What?

Pier. A traitor?

Jaff. Yes.

Pier. A villain?

Jaff. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward;
Spiritless, void of honour; one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame for shameless life?

Jaff. All, all, and more, much more: my faults are
numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms like
thine?

Base as thou'rt false,——

Jaff. No; 't is to me that's granted:
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at
In recompense for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more because preserv'd by thee:
And as, when first my foolish heart took pity
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state
Of wretchedness in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends,—
All I receiv'd in surety for thy truth
Were unregarded oaths, and this,—this dagger,
Given with a worthless pledge thou since hast stolen;
So I restore it back to thee again;—
Swearing, by all those powers which thou hast violated,
Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendship or interest with thee, though our years
Were to exceed those limited the world;—
Take it;—Farewell!—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaff. Say, thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it
Just as thou wilt, because 't is what I'm tir'd with.

Jaff. O Pierre!—

Pier. No more.

Jaff. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee;
But languish after thine, and ake with gazing.

Pier. Leave me:—Nay then,—thus, thus I throw
thee from me,
And curses great as is thy falsehood catch thee!—

[*Exit PIERRE.*]

Jaff. He's gone,—my father, friend, preserver,—
And here's the portion he has left me,
This dagger. Well remember'd: with this dagger
I gave a solemn vow of dire importance,
Parted with this and Belvidera together.—
Have a care, memory, drive that thought no further!—
No; I'll esteem it as a friend's last legacy,
Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,
Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,
That, when they meet, they start not from each other.—

[*Puts the Dagger into his bosom.*]

So, now for thinking.—A blow,—call'd traitor, villain,
Coward, dishonourable coward,—Fogh!—
Oh, for a long sound sleep, and so forget it!—
Down, busy devil!—

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belv. Whither shall I fly?
Where hide me and my miseries together?
Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted?—
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation,
Not daring to look up to that dear face
Which us'd to smile even on my faults;—but, down
Bending these miserable eyes to earth,
Must move in penance and implore much mercy.

Jaff. Mercy?—Kind heaven has surely endless stores
Hoarded for thee of blessings yet untasted:
Let wretches loaded hard with guilt, as I am,
Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the burthen
Before the footstool of that heaven they've injur'd.—
O, Belvidera, I'm the wretched'st creature
E'er crawl'd on earth!—

Belv. Alas, I know thy sorrows are most mighty.

Jaff. My friend too, Belvidera,—that dear friend!—
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,
Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me:—
'T would break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

Belv. What has he done?

Jaff. O, my dear angel, in that friend I've lost
All my soul's peace; for every thought of him
Strikes my sense hard, and dead's it in my brains!—
Would'st thou believe it?—

Belv. Speak.—

Jaff. Before we parted,
Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings
As at his feet I kneel'd, and su'd for mercy,
With a reproachful hand he dash'd a blow:
He struck me, Belvidera; by heaven he struck me;
Buffeted,—call'd me traitor, villain, coward,—
Am I a coward? Am I villain? Tell me;
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.—
Damnation! Coward!

Belv. O, forgive him, Jaffier!—
And if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaff. Hah!

Belv. To-morrow,—
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death,
His bleeding bowels and his broken limbs
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain,—
What will thy heart do then? O, sure't will stream
Like my eyes now.

Jaff. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and to-morrow!

Belv. The faithless senators,—'t is they've decreed
it:

They say, according to your friends' request,
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage;
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited;

False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession,
Warrants are pass'd for publick death to-morrow.

Jaff. Death? doom'd to die? Condemn'd unheard,
unpleaded!

Belv. Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing
To force confession from their dying pangs.—
O, do not look so terribly upon me!

How your lips shake! and all your face disorder'd—
What means my love?

Jaff. Leave me; I charge thee, leave me:—Strong
temptations

Wake in my heart,—

Belv. For what?

Jaff. No more: but leave me.

Belv. Why?

Jaff. O, by heaven, I love thee with that fondness,
I would not have thee stay a moment longer
Near these curs'd hands:—

*[Pulls the Dagger half out of his bosom, and puts
it back again.]*

Art thou not terrified?

Belv. No.

Jaff. Call to mind
What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought
me.

Belv. Hah!

Jaff. Where's my friend?—my friend, thou smil-
ing mischief?—

Nay, shrink not:—now 't is too late;

For dire revenge

Is up, and raging for my friend.—He groans!

Hark, how he groans! his screams are in my ears

Already! See, they've fix'd him on the wheel,

And now they tear him.—Murder! Perjur'd senate!

Murder!—O!—Hark thee, traitress, thou'st done
this,

Thanks to thy tears and false persuading love.—

[Feeling for his Dagger.]

How her eyes speak !—O, thou bewitching creature,
Madness can't hurt thee ! Come, thou little trembler,
Creep e'en into my heart, and there lie safe ;
'T is thy own citadel.--Hah !—Yet, stand off ;
Heaven must have justice, and my broken vows
Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.—
I'll wink ; and then 't is done—

Belv. What means the lord
Of me, my life, and love ? What's in thy bosom
Thou grasp'st at so ?—

[*Draws the Dagger, and offers to stab her.*]
Ah ! do not kill me, Jaffier !

Jaff. Know, Belvidera, when we parted last,
I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,
To be thy portion, if I e'er prov'd false ;
On such condition was my truth believ'd :
But now 't is forfeited, and must be paid for.

[*Offers to stab her again.*]

Belv. Oh ! Mercy !

Jaff. Nay, no struggling.

Belv. Now then kill me,—

[*Leaps on his neck, and kisses him.*]

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaff. I am, I am a coward : witness 't heaven,
Witness it earth, and every being witness :
'T is but one blow : yet, by immortal love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.—

[*He throws away the Dagger, and embraces her.*]
The seal of Providence is sure upon thee,
And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders :
O, thou wert either born to save or damn me !—
By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
By the victorious love that still waits on thee,
Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever,—

Fall at his feet, cling round his reverend knees,
 Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears
 Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him:
 Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
 But conquer him, as thou hast vanquish'd me.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT IV.

A C T V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in PRIULI's House.

Enter PRIULI.

Priu. WHY, cruel heaven, have my unhappy days
 Been lengthen'd to this sad one?—O! dishonour
 And deathless infamy is fallen upon me.
 Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.
 But then, my only child, my daughter, wedded—
 There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
 Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory.
 Curst be the fatal minute when I got her!

Enter BELVIDERA in a long Mourning Veil.

Belv. He's there,—my father,—my inhuman fa-
 ther,—
 That for three years has left an only child
 Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,
 And cruel ruin!—Oh,——

Priu. What child of sorrow
 Art thou, that com'st thus wrapt in weeds of sadness,
 And mov'st as if thy steps were tow'rd's a grave?

Belv. A wretch, who from the very top of happiness

Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,
And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

Priu. What would'st thou beg for?

Belv. Pity and forgiveness:—

[*Throws up her veil.*]

By the kind tender names of child and father,
Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Priu. My daughter?

Belv. Yes, your daughter;
And you've oft told me,
With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

Priu. Don't talk thus.

Belv. Yes, I must; and you must hear too.
I have a husband.

Priu. Damn him!

Belv. O, do not curse him!
He would not speak so hard a word tow'ards you
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.

Priu. Hah! what means my child?

Belv. O, my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

Priu. Kill thee?

Belv. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith
And covenant against your state and senate,
He gave me up as hostage for his truth;
With me a dagger, and a dire commission,
Whene'er he fail'd, to plunge it through this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
To attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour:
Great love prevail'd, and bless'd me with success;
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends
For promis'd mercy:—Now, they're doom'd to
suffer:—

Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,

If they are lost, he vows to appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood the atone-
ment.

Priu. Heavens !

Belv. If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;
Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine he made the sacrifice.

Priu. O my heart's comfort !

Belv. Will you not, my father ?
Weep not, but answer me.

Priu. By heaven, I will :
Not one of them but what shall be immortal.—
Canst thou forgive me all my follies past ?
I'll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee.—
Peace to thy heart ! Farewell.

Belv. Go ; and remember,
'T is Belvidera's life her father pleads for. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Rialto

*Enter the Captain of the Guard, attended by muffled
Drums beating, Guards, and an Executioner with
his Axe,—leading RENAULT, SPINOSA, ELLIOT,
THEODORE, DURAND, MEZZANA, and PIERRE to
Death,—followed by the Officer and Guards.*

SCENE III.

A Street.

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaff. Final destruction seize on all the world !
Bend down, ye heavens ! and, shutting round this
earth,
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion !

Enter BELVIDERA.

Belv. My life,—

Jaff. My plague!

Belv. Nay, then I see my ruin :

If I must die,——

Jaff. No, death's this day too busy ;

Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late :

I thank thee for thy labours though, and him too ;

But all my poor betray'd unhappy friends

Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour :

Yet, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,

Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy ;

But answer me to what I shall demand,

With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Belv. I will, when I've done weeping.

Jaff. Fie, no more on't!

How long is 't since the miserable day

We wedded first?

Belv. Oh—h—h!

Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tears ;

Lest they unman me too.

Belv. Heaven knows, I cannot ;

The words you utter sound so very sadly

These streams will follow.

Jaff. Come, I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Belv. But, was 't a miserable day?

Jaff. A curs'd one.

Belv. I thought it otherwise: and you've oft sworn,
When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn you
bless'd it.

Jaff. 'T was a rash oath.

Belv. Then why am I not curs'd too?

Jaff. No, Belvidera; by the eternal truth,
I dote with too much fondness.

Belv. Still so kind?

Still then do you love me?

Jaff. Man ne'er was bless'd,
Since the first pair first met, as I have been.

Belv. Then sure you will not curse me?

Jaff. No, I'll bless thee:

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee.—

'T is now, I think, three years we've liv'd together?

Belv. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together:
There sleep in peace till an eternal morning!

Jaff. Did I not say, I came to bless thee?

Belv. You did.

Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous heaven!—
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
Where everlasting sweets are always springing,
With a continual giving hand; let peace,
Honour and safety always hover round her;
Feed her with plenty; let her eyes ne'er see
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning,
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
Harmless as her own thoughts; and prop her virtue
To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd,
And comfort her with patience in our parting!

Belv. How? Parting, parting!

Jaff. Yes, for ever parting;

I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon heaven

That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,

We part this hour for ever.

Belv. O, call back

Your cruel blessings,—stay with me, and curse me!

Jaff. Now hold, heart, or never.

Belv. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
Pity my sad condition:—speak, but speak.

Jaff. Murder! unhold me;

Or, by the immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his Dagger.*]

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer;

Resolve to let me go, or see me fall——

[*He draws his Dagger—The Passing-bell tolls.*]

Hark, the dismal bell

Tolls out for death ! I must attend its call too :
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me :
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he died, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewell for ever !

Belv. Leave thy dagger with me ;
Bequeathe me something.—

[*JAFFIER tears himself away, and is going.*]

Not one kiss at parting?—

Oh, my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

Jaff. [*Returning.*] Yet stay:—

We have a child, as yet a tender infant ;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone ;
Breed him in virtue and the paths of honour,
But never let him know his father's story ;
I charge thee, guard him from the wrongs my fate
May do his future fortune or his name.

Now,—nearer yet:—Oh ! that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever!—But my friends!—my oath!—
This, and no more.

Belv. Another, sure another
For that poor little one you have ta'en care of ;
I'll give 't him truly.

Jaff. So:—Now, farewell !

Belv. For ever?

Jaff. Heaven knows, for ever.—All good angels
guard thee! [*Exit JAFFIER.*]

Belv. All ill ones sure had charge of me this
moment.—

O, give me daggers, fire, or water!
How I could bleed ! how burn ! How drown,—the waves
Huzzing and booming round my sinking head
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom !
O, there's all quiet ; here all rage and fury :
The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain ;
I long for thick substantial sleep.—Hell, hell,
Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,
If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am.

[*Exit BELVIDERA.*]

SCENE IV.

*St. Mark's Place.**Bell tolls—Drums beat.**A Scaffold and Wheel prepared.**Executioner with his Axe;**Guards ranged round the Scaffold;**Captain of the Guard, PIERRE, and Officer,
discovered.**Pier.* My friend not yet come?*Enter JAFFIER.**Jaff.* O, Pierre! [*Falling on his knees.*]*Pier.* Dear to my arms, though thou 'st undone my
fame,I can't forget to love thee.—[*Raises him.*]'Pr'ythee,
Jaffier,

Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee;

I'm now preparing for the land of peace,

And fain would have the charitable wishes

Of all good men like thee, to bless my journey.

Capt. The time grows short, your friends are dead
already.*Jaff.* Dead!*Pier.* Yes, dead, Jaffier: they've all died like men
too,

Worthy their character.

Jaff. And what must I do?*Pier.* O, Jaffier!*Jaff.* Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,
And tell thy troubles to a tortur'd friend.*Pier.* Friend!Couldst thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,
I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows;
Heaven knows, I want a friend.

Jaff. And I a kind one,
That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No; live, I charge thee, Jaffier.

Jaff. Yes, I will live;
But it shall be, to see thy fall reveng'd
At such a rate as Venice long shall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by heaven.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee.—Oh, yet—Shall I trust thee?

Jaff. No; I've been false already.

Pier. Dost thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness!

Jaff. Tears? Amazement! Tears?—
I never saw thee melted thus before;
And know there's something labouring in thy bosom
That must have vent: Though I'm a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine?

[*Points to the Wheel.*]

Jaff. Why?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations' quarrels, and been crown'd with
conquest,

Be expos'd a common carcass on a wheel?

Jaff. Hah!—

Pier. Speak:—Is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting?

Pier. Yes, fitting?—I would have thee undertake
Something that's noble, to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Capt. The day grows late, sir.

Pier. I'll make haste.—O, Jaffier,
Though thou'st betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaff. What's to be done?

Pier. This—[*He whispers JAFFIER*—and no more.

Jaff. Hah! Is't then so?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaff. I'll do 't.

Pier. Remember.

Capt. Sir,—

Pier. Come, now I 'm ready.—

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour;
Keep off the rabble, that I may have room
To entertain my fate and die with decency.—
You 'll think on 't! [*He ascends the Scaffold.*]

Jaff. 'T won't grow stale before to-morrow.

[*JAFFIER follows on the Scaffold—The Executioner
prepares to bind PIERRE to the Wheel.*]

Pier. Now, Jaffier, now I 'm going: Now—

Jaff. Have at thee,—

Thou honest heart then—[*Stabs PIERRE*—there—
And this is well too. [*Stabs himself.*]

Pier. Now thou 'st indeed been faithful,—

This was done nobly.—We 've deceiv'd the senate.

Jaff. Bravely.

Pier. Ha, ha, ha! Oh! oh!—

[*Dies.*]

Jaff. Now, ye curs'd rulers,

Thus of the blood ye 've shed I make libation,
And sprinkle it mingling.—May it rest upon you,
And all your race!—

Oh, poor Belvidera!—

Sir, I 've a wife; bear this in safety to her,
A token that with my dying breath I bless'd her,
And the dear little infant left behind me.—

I 'm sick, I 'm quiet.—

[*He dies.*]

[*The Bell tolls, and the Drums beat.*]

The Scene closes on them.



